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A LIFE-POEM.



A LIFE-POEM,

AND OTHER POEMS,

BY

FREDERICK J. KEYES.



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PREFACE.

THE preface of a book is the easiest thing to write, and perhaps, of all literary essays it is the least read. I will leave that however, for the reader to answer, whether the mind approves itself or not in the mission it makes. The life of an author is no easy one though, however easily his prefaces may be written, and they who tread the literary path must nerve all their powers, physical as well as mental, to endure with fortitude the fickleness of the world; and not only this, but the rivalry of others who are striving for the same object. To bear with patience the sneers of those who are more successful, and the envy of those who are inferior. As soon as a book is published the author is known. He is no longer a private individual; he has entered the great arena of minds, where his own must retain its peculiar originality. It is in vain to conceal his name from the world, for of all secrets, the secret of an author is the least safe.

In the long poem I have endeavored to delineate the feelings and the ambition of a young author, yet I would not have the reader think that what I say is intended to be personal, nor would I have anything be taken as personal either to myself or others, in the volume which I have written. I would merely say, that the original one was much larger, and that I have condensed it as much as possible, hoping that I have made up for the quantity by the quality, which would I know, be more satisfactory to the reader and leave less ground for the critic to travel over. I care not what this one or that one will say in regard to my work; it will speak for itself and for the author, and thus I need say no more about it, commending it to the tender mercies of the public, only to add, that whatever may be its success, and if circumstances permit, I shall, at no distant day, publish a volume perhaps, of a somewhat different character, dedicating this my humble effort, to my friends, to whom I remain ever theirs.

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INTRODUCTION.

Dear reader! welcome to the thoughts that flit
Across my mind while here at night I sit,
Within my room, a place so rare and queer,
You ne'er would think to find a poet here,
Propped up with arms and elbows, cushioned soft,
Leaving a space for thoughts to soar aloft,
While yonder spider starts upon the wall
Forth from his web, as if to catch them all:
Then what a feast, think ye, to your surprise
He'd have upon them, if they were but flies!

Forgive me reader! Think not I'm unlearned,
Or ere read through, my book had best be burned;
Thoughts have their metaphors, and this has one,
The critic knows too well to think, to shun—
Nor dream ye critic! that I'm over-vain,
I'll bend my bow, and shoot at you again;
And of the feathers from your pinions tore,
I'll plume again, and shoot an arrow more!

Then, trampling on the ashes of your name,
In triumph pass along the path of Fame.

And ye, bright Muses ! who like angels wait
In shining robes around your temple-gate ;
Fate's finger points—beyond thee is my doom.
Stand back and give my eager footsteps room !
Lest through your ranks I force my onward way,
And from your shrines steal all the fires away,
And then in one farewell and lasting flight,
To heaven pass, from earth's poetic night,
And there forgiven, cast them forth from me,
To light the night-shades of Eternity.

Now reader, farewell for a gentle time ;
The clock has tolled its latest midnight chime ;
To-morrow morn our Poem we 'll begin
When night shall be, as if it ne'er had been ;
For I feel weary—soon to me 't will seem,
As if I was but talking in a dream ;
While stars that shone in the blue vault of heaven,
Have rushed from thence like spirits unforgiven ;
Or like lost souls forgiven ne'er to be,
That wing their flight to night's eternity.

A LIFE-POEM.

SCENE I.

A Modern Room; Morning.

FRANCIS.

Full many a thought has flitted through my mind,
To build its nest in mem'ry's lonely halls;
And many a golden hope that lit my life,
Has fluttered round the shining lamp of Fame,
And been consumed. And yet, there is a hope
On which my soul is centred, and which buoys
Me up to heaven. With it I wrestled hard,
As if it was with Fate, until that hope

Became the angel of my destiny.
And now, my soul is filled to overflow
With silent music which if waked to song,
Would charm the world,—so may my Poem be !
I'd have it like a precious casket, filled
With mighty thoughts, or like an opening mine,
Displaying golden treasures of blank verse,
With gems of rhyme, too rich, for publishers.
A Poem is a true and worthy thing,
And to the Author, dear as earth to God !
While something like a spirit haunts my soul,
For a new Poem, in which earth may see
The beauty of the soul, and not its toil.
It burns within me like a great idea :
My mind is brilliant with it, as with Fame,
To which I'd mount on Poetry's bright wing,
And like a lark, sing sweetly as I went.

Begone, Content ! thou sluggard of the mind !
Thou shalt not enter there, to feed upon
The honey I am hiving for mankind !
For as a mighty river seeks the sea,
So seeks my onward heart its destined goal.
Oh, Poetry ! thou art a living fount,
Drinking my soul in through thy charming jet—
'Tis but a drop,—this little soul of mine :
A little drop from the great mass of life,—

Yet take it as it is; bitter and sweet
 Together mingled in its tiny world,—
 In some right moment, like a bubble blown
 Into existence by the breath of God!
 The sweet, the thought of Fame which like a sun,
 Sets in the zenith of my soul—the bitter,
 The thought of death—yet I will make my verse,
 Bold as a challenge, to a mortal foe
 Delivered on the sword-point of my soul,
 As onward pants it up the hill of Fame!

[*Draws the curtain and looks out on the sea.*

From out the ocean like a blazing ship,
 The king of morn ascends his noon day throne,
 While fore me like a deep and unknown sea,
 Stretches the future, on which I look out,
 As looks a star out on Eternity.
 And like a ship upon a billow tost,
 So is my spirit tost upon a wave
 Of high ambition—Gently waft it on!
 Ye breezes! gently waft the outward-bound—
 The freight is Genius, and the port is Fame.

[*Lady enters, singing.*

Wake the echo of the forest—
 Pour it over hill and glen;
 Where the hunter winds his bugle,
 Followed by his lusty men.

Wake the echo—there are maidens,
Tripping dews with footsteps light,
Where the flowers beneath their leaflets,
Hide the shadows of the night;

And, where birds in leafy cages,
Sing in strains, more sweet than words.
Rise from slumber! Wake the echo!
Join the praises of the birds!

From the dream and from the chamber,
Nature calls the sleeper up;
Pouring deep into the spirit
All the nectar of her cup;

Giving man new life and courage,
With a deeper, fuller soul;
On whose shore, as on the ocean's,
Life's great waves in music roll—

Peaceful, till some strong emotion,
Stirring in its mighty breast;
Lashes up its hidden passion
Mountain-high, in grand unrest.

Wake the echo ! life's great billow
 Waits, to bear it up to God,
And to hosts of angel spirits,
 Leaving flowers where they have trod.

Wake the echo of the morning !
 Bid its sun in joy arise !
To the music of sweet measures,
 Cheer it to the western skies.

FRANCIS.

Welcome, sweet angel from the land of sleep !
I've waited for thee long, when I should be
Miles in sweet fields away. And yet, thy smile
Is part of Nature that I would not miss—
Morning shall make it sweeter unto me—
I have a thought,—

LAURA.

What is it, pray ?

FRANCIS.

Oh, 't is a thought, a mighty thought of Fame.

LAURA.

Embody it in song, and pledge it, me.

FRANCIS.

I'll sing it to thee as I'm wont to sing,
And thou shalt drink it like a cup of wine,
Poured from the rich flask of a human soul.

[*He sings.*

Music within my being lies
Tuned to the thought of Fame;
Which wreathes around its harp divine,
Wreathes of immortal flame.

Such as lights up the realms of death,
With fair and fadeless light;
Like stars of earth forever set,
Yet left, to gild its night.

Oh, Fame! I love thee! Thou shalt light
Me onward to thy goal,
And chase away the clouds, that hang
Like midnight round my soul:

And thou shalt bid me hang my lamp,
Up, in the world's great dome,
And, may its light be pure enough,
To cheer my earthly home;

And warm me up, for now I feel,
That I am cold and chill ;
And oh, my heart is cold enough,
To be forever still !

And like a hapless one, who 's lost
Faith in all things but Fame ;
There 's nothing left for me below,
But to build up a name.

Drawing new friends around me here,
When old ones pass away ;
Which in themselves, are nought but forms
Of fair and fading clay.

Here ends my song—'t is like a dream,
Which bears the soul away,
And makes it feel, as if 't would fill
Even Eternity.

LAURA.

'T is sweet and sad to me, as is the song
Of a lone bird, heard in the winter time ;
That droops its pinions on the leafless bough
And shivers out its mournful notes, which wake
An echo only in an empty nest,
Lone as itself, and shaken by the winds.

Or like some chiming verses, that I found
Hard by a flower which I had stooped to pick,
And as they tempted me, I snatched them up
And folded them in joy,—I knew not why,
Within my bosom, for I felt, as if
They were too sweet for Fame—
Too dear for vulgar eyes to look upon :
Yet listen while I read.

[*She reads.*

Our human life is like a river wide,
Rippling with music of the distant sea,
Bearing rich freights of souls upon its tide,
To the great flood-gates of Eternity.

There shall the Poet and the Warrior lay
The sword and pen together down in peace :
The mighty echoes of the world decay,
And long its crumbling shores, forever cease.

And all the light and beauty of our life,
Like a bright rainbow, vanish into God ;
Nor heart or hand be left for human strife,
To animate a single lifeless clod.

Begone ! vain thoughts ! and let the future go !
What though the morrow ope on life or death ?
Life is the wonder of a thing of wo—
And death, the awful hushing of a breath !

The present moment only, is our own ;
A little hinge, on which a great door turns—
A tiny socket, where a candle blown
By every wind of Fame and Fortune, burns.

The path to Fame is nameless and obscure,
And shakes with great souls as they pass along ;
While the cold world hangs round with cunning lure,
To cheat the minstrel even of his song.

The world is happy, though 't is growing gray—
It sees with joy, new forms upon its soil :
Time o'er his ploughshare sweats his soul away,
While weeds spring in the furrows of his toil.

Upon the ruins of the mighty Past
Bright empires flourish and grow dim, and wan :
The mind can hardly its great change outlast—
Thus time rolls on, and makes a wreck of man.

While on its forehead I would brand my name,
Scarred as it is—and I would fill my breath
With song divine—and in life's last hour, Fame
Shall give me flint, to bear the strike of Death.

FRANCIS.

Oh, 't is some youthful bard, whose growing soul
Is flooded with the gift of Poesy,
Which ebbs and flows in golden waves of Rhyme :
One of the few, the sons of Genius,
Who never publish, but at times who throw
Their poems out before a scornful world,
Unwelcome, therefore unapplauded, like
Rich gems flung on a lone and barren shore,
Grasped by the greedy waves, which ever roll
Up from the great sea of oblivion.

LAURA.

Yet wouldst thou write a Poem ?

FRANCIS.

Dost thou command me to ?

LAURA.

Yes ! I command !

And were I Queen of England, I would make
Thee Poet-Laureate.

FRANCIS.

And what shall be the theme ?

LAURA.

All things are fitting for a poet's theme,—

From lowest to the highest, e'en to God :
Though it should gather all the Universe
Within its magic circle, like a star,
And hold it up to Him, ever to hang,
A rainbow round the everlasting throne,
To dazzle angel-eyes—and it should flow
Smoothly, yet mighty as a cataract,
Turning the earth round like a mill-wheel ;
And in it shrined, the poet's soul should be,
As in the acorn dropping through the wind,
There lies in *embryo*, the forest oak.

FRANCIS.

But hast thou not some great, and cherished theme ?
For metaphor, I'll give thee repartee—
There waves a forest nigh, and I will thence,
And weave a laurel for thy barren brow,
Of oak leaves gemmed with acorns, and I'll make
The queen of forests, with a broad, green branch
To be thy sceptre, and to match thy crown.

SCENE II.

Path through the forest. Francis and Laura riding.

FRANCIS.

Here is an ancient cave scooped in the rock,
Where dwells the Hermit—mortals look with fear
Into the dark and august dignity
Of his majestic face, solemn with age—
While through the vigils of the lonely night,
His lamp shines through the forest like a star.

LAURA.

And is he happy?

FRANCIS.

Happy as hermits are,
And yet, there is a tale.

LAURA.

Of love, perchance.

FRANCIS.

Yes, he was loved.

LAURA.

And was she worthy of him?

FRANCIS.

Worthy as Satan with a lovely smile.
To gain his love, she tried affection first,
Then treachery. The while her youthful smiles
Were lavished on him like the rain on flowers
In April month. And when her smile was sweetest,
He flung her from him as a great soul casts
A demon from its gates, and says, "Begone!"

LAURA.

And was her smile so sweet?

FRANCIS.

For me, like him,
I'd rather see the devil frown, than smile—
Forgive the phrase—and yet 't is true the more!

LAURA.

And did she ask his pardon?

FRANCIS.

‘Go! he said,
Where is the strength within me that shall bear
Thy guilty soul upon my prayer to God?’
Yet still she lingered,—

LAURA.

And did he relent?

FRANCIS.

She swooned—and in her swoon, she heard the words,
‘Go ask for pardon at the gates of Heaven!’

LAURA.

Yet she did love him?

FRANCIS.

But her love
Was more like passion, like a maiden who drinks in
With tempting eyes the beauty of a youth,
To spread for him a couch as soft, as love.

LAURA.

What of his childhood?

FRANCIS.

He was a pensive child—

Books were his playmates, and he loved them well.
He had companions, and of them was one,
Whose lovely image haunted all his dreams—
Between them, friendship ripened as the bud,
Ripens into a fair and perfect flower ;
Thus childhood passed, and youth stole on their hearts
(Waking young Cupid slumbering in his bower)—
Life's chain complete, yet wanting one bright link
To make it more so.

LAURA.

Did they love ?

FRANCIS.

The angel of love flitted round their hearts,
As flits a bird around its narrow cage
To find a door. And ere their footsteps left
The altar of their wedded life, a form,
Like a lost spirit from the other world,
Stole in between them, while they heard a voice,
(Solemn and deep, as if it spoke their doom)—
' Ah, sad and lonely is the convent cell ;
Lonely and sad shall be the hermit's cave—
See that ye do the penance ! and thou shalt
United be in heaven.' A year passed on,
And bitter grew their love, and they were parted.
Now when the earth grows tender with the dew,

And bathes its huge form in night's silver bath,
His prayer floats with her vesper-hymn to Heaven.

LAURA.

'Tis sad indeed, and if there are two souls
Worth God's great gift of pity, it is them.

FRANCIS.

No more, no more of these! Between them falls
A curtain dark as death's! Yet we will call
Upon the Hermit in his lowly cave.

LAURA.

Shall we alight?

FRANCIS.

Here give thy hand, and jump
Like a glad soul into an angel's arms.
As for thy docile Arab, set him loose,
To crop the clover and the growing hay,
While we enter.

SCENE III.

Hermit's Cave.

LAURA.

Sir Hermit, we have come
To ease life's burden of its loneliness,
And add a green spot to its desert waste.

HERMIT.

Green spots there are, but they are of the past,
Lonely and beautiful, and wild are they
As ocean-islands to the sailor's eye,
Which he has past forever. I'd give my life
For one of them so fair, if it would be
An Eden unto me, as it was then!

LAURA.

Dost wish for childhood?

HERMIT.

My childhood's home, it was a paradise,
A palace of a cottage by a lake
Whose music floated not upon the breeze,
But bore itself in silence to the soul.
Oh, it was there I learned to love a star
Which haunted me and that bright, silver lake.
But I have changed. That lake seems but a drop,
A silver drop of memory in my soul,
Haunted by a lost star, which as it set,
Let fall the key of heaven.

LAURA.

And dost thou read the stars?

HERMIT.

Yes, and with stars, which are like books to me,
I read the fortunes and the fates of men.

FRANCIS.

Then read me mine! Stay! I would have it like
An album crowded to the very end,
With sweet and precious things, on whose last leaf,
Deep in the awful blank that death shall leave,
The world shall write the finis-word of Fame.
But if despair's dark shadow come between,
Then paint it not, nor tell me that I live!

For if t' is possible I fain would look
On the bright side, the future may turn up.

HERMIT.

Be reconciled to death, for thou must die!
Sooner or later—'t is thy destiny.

LAURA.

But what is this?

HERMIT.

'Tis of a lady in the bloom of life,
Ere womanhood had budded through her teens.
At sunset hour, I'll meet thee here, and tell
The history of the picture, and when night
Hangs out its stars, I'll read thy different fates,
And may they chime together like twin songs,
Lovely and sweet as melodies of heaven.

[*They depart.*]

FRANCIS.

Oh, he would love to be a child again,
Forgetting all the wealth that manhood brings him.
Poets there are, who sing themselves to sleep,
Within the cradle of this worn-out theme;
Their sweetest echoes still the same sad song,
Losing its early beauty, as their life

Loses reality. Of such frail stuff as this,
Their fame is made of, and they die in it,
And wrap it round their souls like a thin shroud
Scarce large enough to cover them from death.
The past to me, it was an only dream,
From which I woke from, and I find, I live!
And that I shall live till the hour of death!
My fate shall be as God hath willed it first;
There is within me that, which tells me so,
That beats in unison with His great soul.
A purpose like a line, runs through our lives,
Blighted though it may be, 't is reached at last,
Wove at the end into a shroud by death,
Which we shall wear throughout eternity.
It is a knife which cutteth through the soul,
Its keen edge piercing to the tender quick,
Sharpening itself upon the strop of life;
And wo to him who snatches it from God,
And with it cuts frail nature's silver cord;
On him the curse of heaven shall ever fall—
No friends shall weep, as stand they by the brink,
Where rushed he downward on the path of Cain.
There was one such. Alas! he was my friend—
In love's despair he broke the span of life,
Just when 't was fullest with the light of hope,
Now like a rainbow broken in the sky,
Part fair and bright, the rest, an awful blank!

The world was cold, so cold, it froze his heart,
As winter doth a wave, when mountain-high.

The earth is lovely, and a single glance,
Is more than 'nough to satisfy the soul :
Still let me live ! Heaven's greatest boon is life,
Thanks, that it hath no bitterer drug than death !
After so many in their prime have died,
'Tis easier for me, rather than to live ;
Yet thanks for life, for earth is beautiful !
It sweetens round us for our last farewell—
If I was dead, it would be lovely still,
But loveliest I'd have it, round my grave.

Come let us stretch our walk towards the shore,
And write our names together on the sand,
For ocean waves to treasure. There was one
Who lost her voice, and found it side the sea,
As she was gathering shells. She had been mute
From childhood up. The ocean stole her voice,
And treasured it within a fairy shell,
Till wandering with her lover on the shore,
She thought she heard it singing, and she reached
And plucked it up, because so beautiful,
And ever afterward that shell was mute,
Yet treasured was it in the cabinet
Of after-life, and oft its ocean song,

Floateth in music from her memory.
One day within the forest I did catch it,
Trembling in sweetness round her rosy lips.
I'll sing it to thee.

[*He sings.*]

SONG OF THE SEA SHELL.

Love me, oh love me, I'm harp of the ocean,
Thrilling with music the dance of the wave ;
Listen, oh, listen to me while the syren
Sits lonely and mute in her coral cave.
Weaving far down amid watery bowers,
A shroud for her lover, of sad sea-flowers.

I have wandered in many a foreign land,
Been thrown by the ocean on many an isle ;
But ne'er through the world have I met with an island
So fair as thy face, with its full young smile.
Nor e'er been thrown on so soft a strand,
As the smooth white beach of thy kindly hand.
Love me, oh love me maiden of beauty,
Bear me from scenes of night and decay ;
From the cold ocean take me up gently,
And lay me within thy warm bosom away.
And I will whisper sweet tales to thy ear,
Tales which the lovely alone may hear.

LAURA.

A song is ever sweet,

But sweetest 't is to him who minstrels it,
Forth from the ocean of his many thoughts.
Language is music, 't is the poet's own
With which to fill the universe with song,
And bid the earth go singing on its way.

FRANCIS.

I hear the raindrops trickling through the clouds,
Like tiny bells they jingle on the waves.
Oh, this is nature in her wilder mood,
I love to see her sometimes wear a frown,—
It looks so handsome on her summer brow,
Making a rainbow of its ugliness.

LAURA.

Here is a fisher's hut and let us in,
And leave the storm outside, and in the while
We 'll gossip with him in his little world,
The darling little world of his affairs!

[They enter.]

FRANCIS.

Like the Disciples caught, a mending nets,
To catch the living treasure of the sea.

FISHER.

I am a good disciple of my trade ;
A good trade is a master-thing to win ;
But I am poor ; what wouldst thou have ?

FRANCIS.

It is a glorious honor to be poor,
And it is well—the sons of Genius
Were ever in the line of poverty.
Yet beggar-roofs have sheltered kings ere now.
But think of those, earth's sad unfortunates,
Whose minds are temples whence the light has fled,
Or, like great pyramids of intellect,
That made the world bright with the light they held,
Within a moment's space grown dim and dark,
And toppling down majestic to the grave,
As if too mighty to sustain themselves,
And the great burden of a mightier fame.

FISHER.

Many, perchance there are.

FRANCIS.

And many more shall be,
Madness in some exciting hour shall come,
And eat into the sweetness of their minds,
Making their lives as brilliant meteors,

Which leave behind them on the tide of death,
A glory which the angels wonder at,
An immortality which envied is,
By all the living, and by half the dead,
Filling the earth with groans of discontent,
That they should be forgotten.

FISHER.

There is a tide whose hourly glass is red,
Red with the murder of immortal souls,
Committed in the revels of the night,
Sweetened with wine and song. That tide they say,
Has inspiration in its crystal glass,
And ever on the crimson of its wave,
Some great soul floats to glory and to wo,
Freighted with intellect, a noble ship,
With streamers fair, wrecked on a lovely shore !

FRANCIS.

'T is true, and I have heard of many such,
Who drown their sorrows in a cup of wine,
Which death at last drinks up, drugged with a soul
And all its miseries ; and there are those
Who with a wine cup patch a broken heart ;
And all for love—I 'll tell thee what is love ;
'T is an untimely plant which flourishes
Upon a tender soil, the prey of circumstances,
And the sport of chance.

FISHER.

And yet 't is good advice
That those who love, had better marry,
And those who marry better love,
For marriage is the union of two lives.
And blest the powers of calculation, when
In life's arithmetic two change to one,
United by the holy plus of love.

FRANCIS.

How is it with thee? Hast thou never loved?

FISHER.

I never meddled much in love or law affairs:
Once I did love, and yet I did not love,
There was no angel nigh to whisper, Yes.

LAURA.

The storm is over, and the scene is changed
To earth again, beneath a dome of blue.
Let us depart.

FRANCIS.

Farewell, mine humble host!
The shades wait for us at the Hermit's cave.
Here is a purse for thee, and thanks beside;
Thy cot has been as sunshine in the storm.

FISHER.

Hold! For a kiss from yonder rosy lips,
I'd plunge in ocean for its deepest pearl.
Wilt give the boon? They have been mute till late,
Where words do lack, kisses should make them up;
And yet forgive the wish—

LAURA.

I grant the boon,
And waft it to thee—may it grace
That greatest of all ornaments of man—a beard!
And now, farewell!

FISHER.

A kinder, sweeter word
Was never spoken.

[*They depart.*]

FRANCIS.

The sinking sun has lost his better half,
On the horizon of the eastern world;
And weak, and weaker grows the flaming glow,
Of daylight on the hearthstones of the west.

LAURA.

Or what's more apt,
There's half a sun, and quarter of a moon.

SCENE IV.

Hermit's Cave : Sunset.

LAURA.

The voice of singing through the forest floats,
Like the clear music of an angel choir ;
One voice sings sweet, and clearer than the rest ;
Maybe 't is hers, the heroine of the picture—
But hark ! [*The convent choir singing.*

FRANCIS.

'T is sweet and holy. Ah, that song shall haunt,
The cloisters of my memory, and when,
Like a bright shadow from the earth I've passed,
'T will haunt my grave, and wake me up from death.
 [*They enter the Hermit's cave.*

LAURA.

Where is the picture ?

HERMIT.

I have hung it up,
Hard by the casement. In a scene like this,
She wandered forth. To her the summer breeze
Was wafted in, and wafted out in song,
Which chimed with fingers sweeping o'er a harp,
A harp that was a mother's dying gift,
While on it like an angel did she play,
And sweeter than an angel did she sing.
But to have heard her song, it would have given
The boon of music to indifferent ears.
She never whispered Mother, save in prayer ;
She was an heiress, and broad lands,
Bloomed round her as their mistress, yet her heart
Was richer far than all the wealth of earth.
She knew no passion and no dream of love ;
The world saw little of her, save the stream
And wood that traced her footsteps where they fell,
Light as an angel's on the breast of earth.
The while she sang, and sang so sweet, that Death,
Stopped short to listen till he came too near,
And like a lark, her soul went up to Heaven.

The twilight came and wept her absent steps,
And morning missed her on the pleasant fields.
Bright flowers, the sweet mementos of her care,
Grew up unplucked. and lone, they knew not why ;

While from the passer, and the wandering child,
They asked an answer, but no answer came ;
And in their wo, they sought it of the earth—
But it was mute. Still, from the summer-sky,
Came rain and shower, but no kind words from her ;
And yet they dreamed of her, and dreamt she came
And filled their tender cups with twilight dew,
Distilled from heaven, and sweet as angel tears :
Then stroked their tender heads, until they bloomed,
Lovely as roses, and forgot their grief,
And in her bosom bore she them to heaven,
To plant within her garden, she had there,
While angels since have marked a void in earth,
Which mortals mourn. Oh, she was beautiful !
And heaven yearned for one as pure as her,
To make an angel of, and through each age,
To sing to God, of earth, ere yet the curse
Like an eternity upon it grew ;
Ere Eden like a garden of fair weeds,
O'er-ran the earth, and bloomed upon its blight,
And man was driven into Paradise,
Reft of the presence of all things divine,
And studying God, through Nature's dark eclipse.

FRANCIS.

Man is so raised up, like
A demon on the pinnacle of guilt,

He would not know the Eden that was his,
Although it bloomed in beauty fore his eyes.
Still to his lips the curséd fruit is sweet ;
Yet take the curse of God from off his soul,
Earth would be Eden to him. God loves earth,
And he but sins unconsciously, who says,
That aught is curséd that is loved of Him.
Man is the curséd, and the tempter woman,
Gave him her heart, to anchor through it all.
Before he turned his back upon his God,
He did not know the depth of woman's love,
But found it fathomless, deep as their sin,
And in it, she forgot she tempted him,
And nought remembered of it, save the dream,
That in a favored hour he fell from heaven
Into a woman's heart, and that the fall
Was followed by the lasting curse of God.
And then a messenger in serpent-form,
Went gliding up the path from hell to heaven,
Stinging the feet of angels as he passed,
And hissing round the everlasting throne,
Did curse God back, and thus, was man revenged.

HERMIT.

Woman is lovely, lovelier far, than man ;
Her hand has strewn life's roughest path with flowers,
And smoothed the pillow of the dying head.

'T was thus with Leonore, that was her name ;
She was an angel to the poor, and loved.
Although her robe was of the costliest silk,
Her smile seemed sweeter in it, and her hand
As kindly patted Nature's rougher garb,
While many felt the softness of her gold,
Nor heard it jingle as it freely dropped,
Blessing and blest within the hand of want.
Ages to come, the legend shall enshrine,
The legend of the Lady Leonore,
And how in peace, her young life passed away.

'T was in the stillness of the twilight hours,
They found her gazing out upon the fields
Which sloped and undulated to the west,
In all the beauty of a woodland scene :
While the soft breeze came wandering through her harp,
Lightly as if it touched a sacred thing,
Then playing, went to kiss the evening flower
Ere it was closed in sleep, and in the sky,
The moon bent forward as it neared the west,
To look upon her face, and then a voice,—
The distant hills were calling on her name.
It seemed as if the host of heaven set loose,
To find an angel,

FRANCIS.

And the evil one,

Forever led them wrong, till they were lost,
And hell was filled, and heaven was all alone,
In solitude with God, while earth was sacked
To fill it up again with souls redeemed,
And thus millenium was ushered in,
And the great gate of mortal birth was closed.

LAURA.

Was she your friend, this one of whom you spoke?

HERMIT.

She was my friend, and earth is holier far
In the pure sight of God, now she has lived in it.
But see! the stars are out. 'Tis time our talk
Was of our business.

FRANCIS.

The stars are bright, and as I upward gaze,
Would that I was a star! A star of fame!

HERMIT.

When wast thou born?

FRANCIS.

There is a legend of my life: 't is this —
I was a spirit, and upon my path,
I met Guy Fawkes within a powder plot,

Trying to blow the House of Commons up,
Which scared me into life, and hence my birth,
And angels might have wondered, as I stood
Trembling upon the threshold of this world,
And caring not, whether I lived or died.
But since, a wish has often crossed my soul,
That the cold earth would open like a grave,
And take me in, and spare the pangs of death.

HERMIT.

There's nothing gained by an ungodly wish—
What of thy early life?

FRANCIS.

My early life was one poetic dream ;
The books I read were books of poetry.
'T was a delight to me, in summer time,
To take some book of Byron's from the shelf,
And 'neath the green roof of some spreading tree
Sprawl on the grass and read it o'er and o'er,
And mark the passages I loved the best.
For him I loved the most, and always shall,
He seemed the mirror of my own dark soul !
And in the dimness of the spirit-world,
He strives with Shakespeare for the poet's crown,
The while their mighty ghosts with bony hands
Split the bright thing in two, that one should wear,

And fame, alas ! may ne'er another grant.
 Of Scott, and Keats, they had their passing day ;
 The one, so young he did not live to see
 The phantom of his fame—to him his life
 Went drifting swiftly onward to the grave,
 Sweetened with music which he made himself ;
 A brilliant star which fair and early rose,
 And loomed up in the glory of the world,
 Too full and clear for men to look upon
 Till at its zenith, when it dimmed and turned
 Away from earth, to twinkle into heaven—
 The other died, shrouded in years of fame.

HERMIT.

And Homer ?

FRANCIS.

There was more Greek, than poetry in him,
 And like a weed his fame has gone to seed
 To blossom through the turf of ages.
 Men reverence him for he is so old :
 Pity the students whose thin ghosts of soul
 Explore the Iliad and Odyssey,
 And limping, travel up the college-path !
 And modern authors, they are of the school
 That's termèd Spasmodic ; for at times, their souls
 Get into fits and spasm through their verse,

Whose vague illusions and whose crude ideas,
Go off like rockets through an evening sky,
Into a fame of ashes and of smoke,
Until, at last, Death like a critic comes,
And cures them of delusion's worst disease.
And poetesses they are of the few,
Who write their hearts out to the world like men :
Green tendrils springing from a mighty oak,
To cheer it in the winter of decline !

The market now is overstocked with prose,
And those who buy it, get their money's worth
Of paper reamed in cloth and fading gilt.
The world seems to have lost its memory,
May be, 't is greatly owing to its age,
Soon it will have to be waked up to death,
And to the end of all things. They are fools,
Who write their lives out for the world to read,
As if afraid posterity would tell
A lie about a little lump of clay,
That once was fashioned in the form of man.

HERMIT.

They are of such a class,
Who go to bed at night, and say their prayers
Which tickle Satan's ears, and who wake up,
Feeling all over a little famous-like,

Then bless and curse God for it in a breath,
 Just as their wine inspires them, or as good
 Or evil gets possession of their souls.
 While History is but a pack of cards,
 Which to the mind at college, and at school,
 Deals out its kings, and queens, and knaves; and thus
 Half of the greatness of this world is made.

FRANCIS.

But what 's all this to having fortunes told?
 Yonder there is a lovely star which grows
 Larger and larger in the evening sky;
 Looming in glory out till now it hangs
 Divinely beautiful, a star of stars!
 I know 't is mine.

HERMIT.

'Tis coupled with a star:
 Beside of thine, 't will flicker and grow pale,
 And leave thee lonely on the top of fame:
 Nor on thy life shall dawn another star
 Lovely as that, to cheer thy sad decline
 Adown the path which all at last must take,
 Which leadeth to a goal they call the grave;
 Thine shall appear fresh to the traveller,
 And he shall stop and push aside the flowers,
 To read thy name.

FRANCIS.

And will it be remembered ?

HERMIT.

Thy fame shall brush from it, the dust of years,
And thou shalt hear the ages yet to be,
Echo with it as with a clarion.

FRANCIS.

Shall I live long ?

HERMIT.

Thou shalt depart just when God calls for thee,
He waits not, either for a yes, or no,
And man at best must take him at his word,
And render in at last a full account,
Of that vast loan, a soul—and how he spent it ;
In short, this is thy fortune, mark it well,—
That thou shalt live and die like other men,
And what comes after, God shall tell thee of :
Yet good advice, thou need'st it in the extreme !
The pathway up to fame is not so smooth
As men would have it, for they make it rough
With frequent stumbles ; yet in going up,
Preserve the balance-line of life, that thou
May 'st stand erect upon its mighty top.
Nor dizzy grow upon its awful height !

Yield not to slanders—let them take their course,
For they are made of poor, and feeble stuff,
That broken in the using, injure not.
Mark well the circumstances for thy good,
And hold thy passions with a steady grasp ;
And honor, too, see that ye keep it bright,
'T will crust thy life with immortality :
And take it all in all, thou shall be made
Better by living, and through life thou 'lt find
More to admire, than there is to condemn,
Even of faults.

LAURA.

And what is mine ?

HERMIT.

Oh, thou shalt be
A gentle angel by the fireside hearth :
Thy hand shall smooth the heavy brow of care,
Which shall be all the lighter for its weight.

LAURA.

Shall I be happy ?

HERMIT.

Thou shall be happy as the flowers that spring,
Just where God's hand has planted them on earth,

And even death shall have a joy for thee.
 A well spent life shall make a death-bed sweet,
 And thou shalt hear a voice say, when 't is time,
 'Here lay thee down, and I will cover thee
 With the green earth, and thou shalt sleep a sleep,
 Too soft and deep, to be disturbed by dreams.'
 Farewell! nor further seek by human means,
 To pry into the future—

FRANCIS.

Farewell! and when we chance to come this way,
 We 'll think of thee, and take thee at thy word.

[*They depart.*]

If ever two were cheated, it is us;
 Here is my charger, champing up his bit
 And bridle with impatience. If let loose
 He 'd root the forest up, and bury it
 Within the Hermit's cave, and then he 'd rush
 Without me on to ruin, or his stall,
 In frantic fury for a mess of oats,
 Though snuffed he them from ocean's deepest cave.
 Such is the instinct of a brute, while man
 Is up to him in his ambition, which
 Is but an instinct springing in the breast
 Of all men, to be great, and make their mark
 Upon the age either with sword or pen;
 But who, through all their lives to age, do nought

But scratch away at gravel, while life's sun
Sets far away from fortune and from fame,—
While on the other hand, are those whose lives
Lose all their sweetness when their fame is gone.

LAURA.

Why then, so yearn for fame?

FRANCIS.

Some men they say, have fame thrust on themselves :
To such, it is a rotten legacy,
And sweeter 't is to me to earn my fame :
'T is my reward, and in my dreams to-night,
The top of earth shall be the top of fame,
With me upon it.

SCENE V.

Morning: Francis and Laura Riding.

LAURA.

Dost see yon tree?

FRANCIS.

'T is stretching up its leafy arms to heaven,
As if in morning prayer, while the light
Hangs like a dusky night-cap round its head.

LAURA.

Well, we will call it Fame, and have a race,
To see who'll reach it first.

FRANCIS.

It is too near:

I'd have it be a little farther off,
And if I was in tournament or camp,

And thou didst challenge me as thou hast done,
I'd have a flag of truce, and give it thee,
Or what is better, make thee my prisoner
On thy own parole.

LAURA.

When I say start, then start!

[*They race, and Francis is thrown from his horse.*

FRANCIS.

Ye gods! why am I here? My senses feel
As if I'd found them but a moment since.
'Tis sure I'll never ride again to fame
On such a horse as that; lucky for me,
That such a plot is here to ease my fall—
Next time I'll say my prayers before I start.

LAURA.

Forgive me Francis, are you hurt?

FRANCIS.

I'm glad I am—
To have the pleasure of forgiving you.
'Twas all my fault 't will learn me how to sit
More firmly in the saddle, and to hold
A fiery steed with a more skilful hand.
And after all 't was but a clever trick

Of horsemanship, and yet, to say the least,
I do not feel like walking, after this,
'T would make my bones rattle at every step ;
Besides, the earth is not a feather bed,
That I should sprawl upon it.

LAURA.

Here 's Black Prince,
His flashing eyes are filled with innocence,
Save, that he looks as if he brushed a fly,
Off with his mane, from that black coat of his.

FRANCIS.

Where did he come from? By this time he might
Have prancing stood, upon creation's verge ;
And I, instead of being here on earth,
Been thrown to the next world !

LAURA.

The Doctor caught him leaping o'er a stile.

FRANCIS.

'T is strange ; he must have had an arm of iron.
I hope he has given him a dose of physic,
To cool his mettle down. Give me the reins !
I'll learn him how to walk ! I'd have him snuff
The fields a little, as he goes along,

That he may love nature as well as I,
For I believe the animal enjoys
Nature like man: although he has no soul,
Yet he has sense and feeling, like ourselves.

LAURA.

I had a dream last night.

FRANCIS.

Perchance, 't was but the shadow of yourself,
That crossed your sleep.

LAURA.

The layer of fun is deep upon your soul;
Would I could cut it to the very quick!

FRANCIS.

Your words are blunt, your tongue's not sharp enough,
To pierce me through. Pray, take the file of wit,
And sharpen the dull saw of daily using,
Which makes too mellow music when it squeaks.

LAURA.

You'd do to bandy words with Shakespeare's Muse!

FRANCIS.

Thanks for the compliment. I'd rather have

Other folks praise me than to praise myself.
Self-praise is not the current coin of earth,
Too many know it as a counterfeit—
When spoke, 't is brother to its devil-twin,
Or like a horse that backs into his stall,
And gets a lash at every step he goes,
Across the eyes and nose, which makes him see
More stars than oats. What was thy dream?

LAURA.

'T was like a temple, which an angel locked,
And then he bore the silver key away :
And as he upward passed in noiseless flight,
I heard it jingle on its ring of stars,
Which in his hand, shone like a golden crown,
And then with it he oped a door which led
Into a brighter temple, where he said,
I'd dwell forever with that lovely dream.

FRANCIS.

And is this all?

LAURA.

All I shall tell thee : better have a care
How thou dost pry through secrets, else I should
Wound thee with patience long, and sorely tried.

FRANCIS.

The granite, woman's secrets are made of,
Is harder than the granite of man's will,
I do believe.

LAURA.

Trouble yourself with it no more, for 't is
A secret guarded well, I'll promise you.

FRANCIS.

Woman can keep all but her love inside,
While him she loves is cunning, to hide his
Behind a kind, yet cold exterior.

LAURA.

How could you treat one that you loved, so ill?

FRANCIS.

Nay! 't is no ill;
True love is not a pearl upon the shore,
To be picked up, for we must dive for it,
And bring it up from its deep cave—the heart,
And try its brightness with the rust of years.

LAURA.

But who are these?

FRANCIS.

Some revelers,
Who make the fields ring with their merry laughs.
May be, our city neighbors come by steam,
To get a pinch or two of country snuff,
And wipe the city gravel from their eyes.
These city folks—no grass grows 'neath their feet,
Much less within their roads. They do not see
Half of the daylight, while their night is sleep,
And sleep itself, is murdered with their snores :
The morning comes, and brings no light with it,
No light there is where Nature's so shut out,
Nor peace or pleasant future comes to those
Whose step is progress, and whose breath is steam.
We will not stop ; I'd rather be alone,
Within my revelings alone with you ;
Their songs will sweeter in the distance sound,
And friendship's sweeter to me far, than wine,
Yet they have both. Did ever city folks
Forget their wine when ever on a spree ?
Thanks we have passed them, yet their merry songs
Are loud as ever, though more faint to us ;
For nature's music deafs our ears to them,
That we may hear the sweetness of her voice,
Lulling and hushing up the voice of sin,
And speaking to our very souls of God.
'T was this that Adam felt within the breeze

Of Eden's garden, and that laved his brow,
And placed thereon a brand of holiness,
Deep in the skin of sin, that man might have
A little of the image of God left,
Which should remind him ever, of the curse
Pronounced on him, and through him, to his race :
Moreover, that God might distinguish 'tween
The fallen angel, and the fallen man.
If not for this upon him, he might be
Happy as devils are, while now, as then,
Within the cool of nature, is a voice
Which speaks to us, and we, in our mistake,
Call it the sighing of the summer breeze,
Or the light passing of the gentle wind
Among the trees. At other times, we call
God's oracles by names we've learned at school.
And loveliest is that flower or plant to us,
Which shuts Him out, though He is everywhere.
'T was thus with our first parents ere they fell ;
The fruit shut God forever from their thought ;
But ere they took it, they looked round and round,
And up above, to see if God was there,
But where he should have been, the Devil stood.

Now all is curséd save that one sad tree,
Which still unblighted, blooms as fair, as when
Beneath it stood the two first forms of life,

Reflecting back the image of their God,
Ere they put on their limbs, the clothes of sin,
Hiding their nakedness, but not the mark
Of God's displeasure. By its virtue, men
Of every age are revered as gods
Of good and evil, while they follow both—
The evil most, because most natural ;
Its path smoothed o'er with pleasure, and with sense,
To make it all the easier to tread,
Padded and strewn with light, elastic flowers,
Which made the fingers of the Devil bleed
To pluck their thorns, that they might not be felt,
Or wound the feet in gently passing down.

[*They return.*

The revelers still are here. The wave of wine
Runs high within their souls. And time's hour-glass
Is filled with it, instead of sand.

LAURA.

Let's spur our horses from a scene like this,
It is too poor for brutes to look upon.

FRANCIS.

Laura, one kiss from those sweet lips of yours,
Shall be my temperance pledge. Wilt give the boon?

LAURA.

I give it thee. See that thou keep it.

SCENE VI.

Morning : Francis walking.

FRANCIS.

How sweet the circumstance to be alone.
Life has no sweeter thing than solitude,
When it is spent in such a scene as this.
Yet in the future like a dream, I see
The march of progress, trampling nature down
With all its beauty. First, a reaper comes,
And with his keen scythe, murders all the flowers,
And then the thunder of machinery,
Drowns the sweet music of the summer birds,
And in a few years, should I own a grave,
They'd buy it of my heirs that they might build
A railroad track upon it, murdering me
In my sweet coffin, with its iron wheels,
And making railroad gravel of my dust.
I'd rather have a ploughshare grate my bones

Than thus he treated after I am dead !
And this is Progress ; so the Devil says,
I'll not believe him, for he always lied.
But God through him doth try the truth of man.
Yet who is this that springs upon my path,
Light as a deer and singing as a bird,
With music in his prattle like a child ?

[*To himself.*]

Whose child art thou, with rosy cheek
And azure eyes so bright and fair ;
With snowy neck so soft and sleek,
And shaded by thy flaxen hair ?
Why need I ask who calls thee dear,
Or who first kissed those cheeks of thine,
And from the dimples, wiped the tear,
That through them traced its watery line.

Since each flower blooming at thy feet,
Seems kindred to thy tender mind ;
Since in each one thy glances meet,
A welcome thou dost seem to find.
And as thine eyes are turned above,
Upon the summer sky so free,
Heaven's angel-children well might love,
So sweet an angel-child, as thee.

While on thy smiling face, the flush
Of joy, impassioned, comes and goes,
More lovely than a lingering blush
Of rosy light at day's repose.
Oh, who would thy young spirit chain,
Or check the pleasure to it given,
For it in early life to drain,
'Mid childhood's sweet and happy heaven ?

And yet I weep, for 't is a light
Which given seems, but only lent,
And which with the first gentle blight,
Burns dim and dimmer till 't is spent.
Your joys that flow undimmed by fears,
Like gems in golden rivers by,
Shall mingle with the tide of years,
And all their light and gladness die ;

And earth bloom with less lovely scenes,
And nature's voices cease to thrill
A human heart, whose childhood's strings
Are snapped, or which no more can feel.
'T is well that thou dost know it not,
'T were sad to dim thy smiles with tears,
Or check the pleasures of thy heart,
By sorrows far beyond thy years !

[*The child approaches him.*]

FRANCIS.

Come near, sweet child! The azure of thine eye
 Hath something of thy mother's softness in it,
 Mingled with flashes of thy father's pride:
 I love to see thee, I was once a child,
 And I should hate myself, if in my soul,
 I would not love thee as I ought. Thou art
 A cherub born within the bower of love!
 And though not mine yet I may look on thee,
 And love thee too. Upon thy rosy cheeks
 Are dimples rounded to the full of hope,
 And I would feel their softness with a kiss,
 When I can catch them sober 'tween two smiles.
 What is thy name?

CHILD.

T'is echoed in the whisper of the breeze,
 And oft remembered in the prayers of flowers
 Which send their breath like incense up to God!
 Oh, nature has a thousand names for me,
 And I am known by each. What wouldst thou have?

FRANCIS.

One of those light and sylvan locks, sweet child!
 That summer round its airy finger twines,
 Dark in the sun and bright within the shade,
 With all the music of the breezes in it!

[A butterfly comes: it flutters and disappears.]

FRANCIS.

Gone like a vision which may not return,
And lost with summer on the distant hills !
And yet, the brightness of it will remain,
As much as if an angel dropped from heaven,
Then floated upward in the same bright path,
Without a token, for the memory
To hang around the image as its own.

Oh, lovely one ! this aching head of mine,
Rests on the pillow of thy memory,
For it has nothing else to rest upon.
Let me rest sweetly, and I'll give thee tears,
Trickling with penance o'er the dreary past,
Like rivers years have nourished in the soul,
To cheer a desert that itself hath made.
While with regret and grumbling, old Death says,
My footsteps are too early at the grave,
And scolds me off for being once before,
And then invites me to a funeral,
Then to a wedding and a revel feast,
Where all the memory of the dead is drowned
Within that of the living, and washed down
The soul's deep gutter, with a gush of wine,
Which is the ether of the memory,
To ease an aching tooth, and kill the nerve ;

Yet never life's memories shall depart,
For the soul with their magic power is filled ;
Long after the beat of the human heart
In the lull of death is forever stilled.

I have a memory—'t is of my youth ;
I felt love early but I kept it in ;
And now I weep over my destiny,
As weeps a mother o'er her wayward child.
Like a bright pearl 't was once within my reach—
I spurned it as the gambler spurns his dice,
And curses them, for in my life's sweet spot,
That love did rankle like a worthless thing ;
A poisonous weed, it sprang and flourished there,
In the deep gap of pain, itself had made ;
Piercing the hedges of affection through,
While passing friendship felt its pricking thorns,
Yet stay ! sad thoughts I would not have thee go
Forth to the world to tell of hopeless love,
For I would rather keep them in my soul,
Sad secrets shut from every one but God !
Yet a voice whispers, ' She was young and fair,
And thou wast cold, and scorned her first advance,
And drove her from thee, till she done thee wrong,
And unrequited love had sweet revenge—
While all the while she loved thee well, as loves
A parent fond, the lovely child he pains.'

It may be true. I loved her once—'t is strange—
I love her not 't is stranger still. And yet
Her look was love, and in itself a heart!
When it was turned on me, its light and joy,
Revealed a world of beauty in her eyes,
In which I dared not revel, while I grew
Cold as an iceberg 'neath an Arctic sun;
And often since, I've felt in solitude,
That God has given me a heart of stone
For one of flesh, which moves instead of beats.
And yet I love that phantom of my heart,
It thrills my being with an earnest joy,
I feel it is a sweet and sacred thing!
While yonder Hermit, he would have me love
And marry too. A curious bungler, he!
To him the future is a mighty chest,
Filled with rich things, that men would love to gain,
And he beside it is a finite mouse,
Gnawing a hole too selfish and too small,
To let his great self through.

[*The Hermit meets him.*

FRANCIS.

How now? Sir Hermit!

HERMIT.

It bodes no good, this talking to one's self.

FRANCIS.

I thought I heard the prick up of thy ears
Upon the breeze, to list at what I said ;
Yet listeners never hear good of themselves.
The Devil once stopped at a country inn,
Amid a crowd of living politics—
To hear their rabble while he took his seat,
Hard by a stove where sat an empty chair.
The room was pleasant but it soon grew hot
With warm debate, for 't was election time—
The time when bribes were in the most demand,
To cushion well the President's hard chair !
Among the rest, there was a minister,
Facing the Devil with a look divine,
And whispering, as 't were the curse of God
Which sent him, quick as lightning from the room,
A howling down the crowded path to hell,
While devils thought the Judgment Day had come !

HERMIT.

Is this the ending of thy long harangue ?

FRANCIS.

I made it long, on purpose that thy speech
Might be the shorter. Add not jest to jest :
This landscape fills my soul with eloquence,
And 't is but right that I should tell it so.

Step forward now—a little walk shall add
A mile of beauty to thy sight. Hast said thy prayers?

HERMIT.

See that thine own devotions do not fail,
I'll see to mine. I am not one of those,
Who build a pathway, leading up to heaven,
For all the world to travel, and which fails
Just as they get there, for they might as well
Travel upon a rainbow as on that,
And yet they would not know the place was heaven,
Though they should gain it.

FRANCIS.

'Twas in heaven
A spirit of another asked, where heaven was ;
And from the outskirts of the realms of space,
That question echoed through eternity
With none to answer it, till it grew faint
And fainter still, in its own echo lost.
While angels saw in the deep dome of heaven
A speck of azure where a star should be !

HERMIT.

It is a pity thou wert not an angel ;
In making thee, God made a grand mistake.

FRANCIS.

He would not then have made one if he had
Cut out that tongue of thine, or struck it dumb.

HERMIT.

Go on! I love that strain of raillery
That I may catch the spirit of its tone!
'T will give me treats of intellectual spice,
Rising like inspiration to my brain.

FRANCIS.

Thy words go through me like a sweet old song,
And fill my soul with quivers of delight;
There are strange things within that brain of thine,
The nest of thoughts which are too old to fly,
Or either sing.

HERMIT.

Methinks there is in thine,
A weather-beaten nest of rotten eggs
Not worth the climbing after, or the risk
Of the great neck of thought, by which the mind
Holds up its Sphinx-like head.

FRANCIS.

Hold now,
I'll sheathe my sword for a more worthy strife!

HERMIT.

He is the greatest of earth's conquerors,
Who wins a laurel in the war of words :
The crown of fame shall blossom on his brow
Long after he is dead : and passing years
Shall throw their laurels proudly at his feet,
While buried ages startle from their graves,
Summoned by the great trumpet of his fame,
To do him honor at the Judgment-Day.

FRANCIS.

Away ! The crown of fame belongs to God,
And He will give it to the one He loves,
Although not of the first of living men,
Yet in the unknown future, he shall be
God's Poet-Laureate. 'T was in a dream,
My eye was forward cast. I looked along
The sea of time, and on its last, sad wave,
There shone a mighty and a brilliant pearl,
Which dazzled me ; and when I looked again,
That pearl was gleaming on a human brow,
Shaping itself into a coronet,
Whose brightness rivalled even that of God's,
Until a sad and silent shape drew near,
And stripped it from that brow, and earth grew dark :
The last great poet of his race, had died—
And, with a groan, his spirit stalked through space,

To gather up the remnants of his fame,
Which seemed to shine in every falling star
That turned to ashes in his frantic grasp,
While others darkened were, ere yet they fell,
Like midnight meteors from the spheres of heaven.

HERMIT.

Methinks, that thou wouldst rather be a soul
Like this, than any other under heaven,
Or yet, above, though howsoever gifted,
And though its power, a spirit could conceive!

FRANCIS.

True! Thou hast traced the progress of my soul
In the right path. It was a year ago
I made a vow. Methinks the sunbeams wait,
To carry up that vow performed, to heaven,
For angel hands to give it in with joy,
And strike their harps that so much more of God,
Sparkles with bright divinity 'mong men.
'Twas this; that with my talents I should make
A poet of myself and thus please God,
And His Almighty providence which makes
A destiny for every one to fill.

HERMIT.

But what of that? You would but starve the world

If it was made to live on poetry—
And now farewell! It may be that the earth
Shall tremble like an earthquake with thy name!
Yet mark my counsel—true and lasting fame
Is worth a death, such as a Shakespeare died!

SCENE VII.

Autumn Landscape.

FRANCIS.

The crown of autumn, leaf by leaf appears,
I would, in truth, it was the crown of fame,
That I might pluck it though 't is made of leaves!

LAURA.

You beat the monarchs of the earth for crowns,
And like a maiden, I will grant your wish,
And weave you one of autumn's brightest leaves,
Fading and fair, as ever maiden wove
For knightly lover, in her rural bower;
With frost-gemmed sceptre made of evergreen,
Which will outlast the beauty of thy crown.

FRANCIS.

No crown of earth becomes a noble brow:

The poet is a king without a crown—
Nature has made him so.

LAURA.

How is your poem?

FRANCIS.

I cannot write one in an inch of time ;
Would that I could, that I might be
Immortal every minute !

LAURA.

But what is that within your hand,
Done up and crumpled like a statesman's speech,
Or like a sermon? Pray, explain yourself!

FRANCIS.

I feel that 't is a sweet and worthy thing,
Ready for ordeal. Oh! there may be
A humming round the hives of human life,
With flatterers thick to drown a name in praise,
Filling the author's soul with sudden joy,
Which may not last. Oh! this is all for fame.
While God has made another world ere this,
And swung it clear and beautiful in space,
Echoing its music to its brother-spheres,
Which ages pause upon their march to hear,

And rolling years grow still to catch the strains,
Lulling them to a slumber, long and deep,
Within the cradle of Eternity.
In short, my maiden poem written out,
But not yet wedded to its lover—Fame.

LAURA.

Despise not fame :
It is the only pay an author gets—
The only true reward.

FRANCIS.

Oh ! fame is like a tide, to which, there is
An ebb and flow, however great it be ;
And it may leave me on a barren shore,
Without a shell to gather, or a pearl,
Waiting in sadness for the wave of death,
That will not swamp my bark, but bear it on
To a sweet haven which has robbed the world
Of half the music which might been its own,
And anchored, too, forever in its port,
Many a noble ship that would have stemmed
Oblivion itself, and turned death into fame
As on they passed, in music, to the grave,
To furl their sails in peace around their God :
And it would give my earnest soul full joy,
To feel that I was following in their wake.

LAURA.

I've heard that Genius was ever strange,
And thou hast caught its spirit. On thy soul
A melancholy like a chaos broods,
Which I would fain dispel, to see thy soul
Arch its vast future with the bow of Hope;
Not one such as the eye may look upon
To see it fade, but one that shall be bright,
E'en in the blue sky of Eternity.

FRANCIS.

My thoughts may lose their sweetness to myself;
What would I give to call them back again,
When they have gone to stem the world's cold tide,
Where, like bright pearls, forever they may sink.

LAURA.

Oh! this is madness. Break the fatal spell
That is too weak to bind so strong a soul,
And give them me, that I may read thy thoughts.

FRANCIS.

Nay, keep your tongue
To criticise with, while I now will read
And run my thoughts out with poetic line.
Thou dost remind me of a gentle youth,
Early in life, marked for the Muses' own.

The gentle rustle of the summer leaf,
Gave sweetest music to his inmost soul ;
And, when the clouds opened themselves like founts,
To pour their treasure on the grateful earth,
A little drop, sparkling as if with light,
Was world enough of beauty, for his mind
To revel in. And, as the silver stream
Ripples with music of the distant sea,
So did the current of his youthful thoughts
Ripple with music, beautiful and sweet,
Of that great sea which has but few outlets,
And those it has, flow like pure, gentle streams,
Along some lone and humble vale in life,
To its possessor—like a paradise,
Which angels may not visit. He was young,
And yet he loved not—there were none to love ;
For fate had robbed him of that golden hope.
He yearned for sympathy, but found it not :
Then onward passed to glory and to death,
In lonely triumph o'er his early foes,
Nor asked forgiveness of so cold a world.

LAURA.

My soul is panting earnest at thy lips,
Its sense of hearing rendered more acute
To know a poem's coming. I will be
A gentle critic even on its faults,

And thou shalt have a heart of sympathy,
To beat thee upward on thy glorious path.

[*He reads.*

The moon appeareth in her silver shroud,
To guide the mariner across the sea,
And light the lover to his lady's bower.
Not so with me. Its pure white shadow, casts
A softness like a mantle, on my soul,
Wove from the memories of happy nights,
Spent in a clime which now is far away ;
While now, as then, the golden-pupiled eyes
Of night, look softly downward into mine,
As if to ask them why they do not weep !

Oh ! I have lain and looked up to the moon,
As looks a soul, up, in an angel's face,
To catch a little of the peace of heaven.
Yet I am happy now ! I feel I'm blest !
So much so, that I do believe my soul
Would be the loser by the gain of heaven.
There is no happiness to those who die
Before their time comes. Heaven is not a place
For men to rush to through the gate of death,
To be gained, only by a little pain
Within the body, which has nerves to bear
A thousand death throes. Mightier 't is than death.
Men call it frail, and yet, 't is strong enough

To keep the soul in till God lets it out.
Life is a drama, and it is for us
To know our part, and—to act it well.
The great reward of life, is life : and we
May best thank God, that He has given all
A chance of gaining it, along with heaven
To spend it in. To live our lives out,
And then depart, with no regrets to leave—
The good we have done shall be working still,
And we shall reap the harvest of it,
Although it be but chaff, instead of wheat.

Know, when thy given life draws near its close,
That you may welcome death, like an old friend
Of your acquaintance, often heard of, yet
Who never called before ; and, that thy life
May pass as easy as a rising sun,
Up to the great hereafter, where the soul,
Which in the prison of the body, saw
But gleams of glory, through its pair of chinks,
Shall open on a bright and matchless scene,
Which it were worth a thousand deaths to see !

Life, makes this world the Eden that it is ;
It would be lovelier if not for sin—
Yet it was holy once, when it sprang forth,
Lovely and glorious, from the hand of God,

And marching to the music of the stars.
And when, amid the beauty of its bowers,
Roamed forms of human life, then it eclipsed
All other worlds, and rivaled heaven itself ;
While God was pleased with all His hand had made.
But now a blight rests on it, and it groans
Beneath its burden, and turns round in pain
Upon its rack of torture. 'T is for us,
To make the earth the Eden that it was,
And ease the heavings of life's human sea
Which beats against its shores. Soon it shall ebb
And flow back silently into the past,
When every pearl is gathered from its caves
By the great diver, Birth ! leaving its bed
Strewn o'er with shells of being, which have lost
Their light and sweetness by the many taps
That fate has made upon them, backed by death,
With the great power of his silent arm,
Plying a lever which might crush a soul
If God should will it. There are sorrowing ones,
Waiting in silence for the wave of death
To bear them off upon it to a land
Dearer than earth, with all its human love.
Oft have I felt that feeling like a blight
Steal on my soul, and I as often strove
To cast it off, but all my efforts seemed
To stitch it to me. Of my many friends

Nature did love me best. In field and grove,
She whispered to me sweeter things than words ;
And though I spoke not, yet each flower I met,
Grew beautiful with silent eloquence,
And, as a harp of music sweet and still,
Played by the breezes in the hush of noon,
Yet scarcely heard above the deep repose,
So was its voice to me, just loud enough
To reach the soul, and so with us 't will be,
Although 't is but a flower which meets our eye,
Yet it can tell a sweet and humble tale,
And pour it out into the rudest mind,
With music in it like a thing of song
Which may not be forgotten, and which fills
The inmost being with an essence sweet,
Long after it has faded into air.

Thus beauty loveth beauty. 'T is its law,
And in each thing there 's something beautiful
For us to love and fix our hearts upon,
Although it be not lovely to the eye ;
For beauty is not always seen—'t is felt—
Nor always it attracts. It oft repels,
Else too much love and fondness weaken it,
For t' is a child that will not be indulged.
Sense loves not beauty, it loves sin too well
To be a traitor to it. In this world,

Beauty is virtue, and 't is loved the less,
For sin's the darling favorite of mankind,
And ever has been from the first of time ;
And thus 't will be until the world is pure,
And long ere fallen man shall make it so.
For 't is a harvest man must sow and reap
However dull and blunt his sickle be,
Or how run down the field of mortal toil.
While life is varied and each passing day
Is one flower more cast on our graves by time,
To blossom there long after we are gone.
And every moment sows its little seed,
Deep in the hardening furrows of the soul,
Where good and evil—like two oxen yoked
To the same plough, strive for the mastery.

Oh, youth's bright hopes, are wild and daring things !
And it is well the world should slight them oft,
That better things than golden weeds should spring
In such a rich field as the field of life,—
Within it hid, the jewel of a soul
Which we must find. 'T is likened to a book,
And he who reads it right is truly wise,
And only wise who truly knows himself.
Such knowledge is the key, which lets the mind
Into the minds of others by a door,
Upon whose latch a secret finger rests,

Seen, not within the sun and shade of thought,
But shadowed in the twilight of itself,
To be our guide along the mystic aisles,
Into the great cathedral of the soul,
Where rolls the mighty echo of the world,
Like a great ocean on a sea more vast,
Which is its only and its nearest shore,
And where the question of the mind is asked,
Why do we live, and why is earth the place
To spend life in? and then, to look around
And gather up the reasons for our life,
To find them countless as the many stars,
And numberless as sands upon the shore;
Even in childhood is the soul alive
To the great problem we may never solve,
And through creation, there is no life given
But hath its aim, its purpose, and its use.
'T is thus with me. I live to fill a sphere,
Which would be dark without me, and which time,
Through all its coming years, could never fill,
And thus I live, and I am standing now,
Upon hope's summit with a hope beyond,
To be the cap-stone of life's pyramid.
And yet, oh heavens! I'm but a troubled child,
Struggling within the arms of destiny,
Loathing the chain that so well fits my soul.
But stay! O, Love! Have I no word for thee?

Poets have sung their souls out in thy praise,
And knights have fought in field and tournament.
The boundless theme is rich as ever 't was,
Charming the world on with its pleasant chime.
Wilt pity me, O Love? This soul of mine,
Is obstinate to thee as 't is to fate,
And very dark at times, as if 't would take
All of the stars of heaven, to light it up.
But I remember: 't was at sunset hour,
I sat and gazed upon the western sky,
While fancy formed the actors in the scene;
And, just as a sweet castle I had finished,
An angel, like a bird, flew in it
And shut its doors, and closed me out forever,
Saddened, and yet delighted that I'd made
A prison for an angel.
The sweetest poetry of woman, is—
To love and die; and she is true and brave,
From the cold world to hide a breaking heart.
See! where she waits the form that never comes,
While stars in beauty gaze upon her face.
She heeds them not. The shadow 'long the walk
Is dearer to her than her own sad star,
While now she starts and listens like a deer,
Whose instinct tells him that the hunter's nigh,
Nigher to him in that still woodland scene,
Than is her lover, to that love-lorn maid,

Swooning into the soft arms of the night,
And thus the heart, that muscle of the frame,
Is strong in its despair, and often through
Over-exertion in love's labor, breaks.
And there is poetry in such a theme,
All sad and sweet, that nature knows not of:
And plaintive rhymes all full of human griefs,
Those dark reflections of our smiling joys,
Seen through the mirror of each daily life,
Till we grow used to them. Nor do we know
What silent music there is in a tear,
That sweetest note within the harp of grief!

Through a deep oriel window, sunset came
And poured its flood of golden twilight in,
Full on the face of beauty and of youth.
A lute lay on the table, and its strings
Were still vibrating with a gentle sound,
As if touched lightly by some hand of song,
Or murmuring to itself in that sweet hour
Some strain it had forgotten, but not lost.
Nor wonder if that lute was memory
On which the past played many a sweet old tune,
While in the holy light of fading day
There sat a youth, gazing upon the scene,
With eyes that seemed to drink its glory up,
In one full glass to the horizon's brim,

Until the tide of nature in his soul,
Rushed for an outlet, and he started up
And gave it vent in flowing strains like these,—

Sunset showers are sweetly falling
On the hill, and vale, and bower ;
Deep of light to deeps are calling,
Holy is the sunset hour !

Welcome, sunset ! free from sorrow,—
Hearken ! 't is the reaper's song,
Floating o'er the fragrant meadow,
By the breezes borne along.

Stay, ye breezes ! fan my forehead !
Catch the music of my brain !
Then go singing through creation,
While I tune my harp again.

Like sweet bees from hives of honey,
Golden thoughts, go meet the world
In its coldness, with the glory
Of a flag of genius furled !

That no chill breath of opinion,
Make its noble folds their dupe ;
Rather have it furled forever,
Than to see it sadly droop !

Sunset deepens ; there are spirits
 Hovering round us here below ;
Spirits which the past inherits,
 With their pleasure and their woe.

Till the earth with all its glory,
 Shall in flames of fire be rolled,
And, like swift-winged gods, the angels
 Reap the harvest of the world !

And then as if o'erpowered, he sank to rest,
In the soft slumber of the arms of sleep ;
And life was silent save the gentle breath,
That mingled warmly with the summer breeze.
Stars peeped in on him through their silken lids
That closed his eyes in, like two azure pearls
Within their shells, hid from the outward world ;
While through his dream the angels heard a voice
Sigh for a name on earth, and then a prayer
Like a sweet poem, floated up to God,
From that young soul so hungry after fame.

There is a time ; 't is when stern manhood comes,
And bids us gird the axe of purpose on,
To hew our way through circumstance, and reach
The great or little goal of destiny.
'T is then we throw the dice with steady arm

Upon the turning tables of the world ;
The shifting game of life to gamble well
And snatch its chances by a single hair :
And age may come ere we may rest upon
Bright eyries where our nests of hope are built,
And where like eaglets crying out for food,
Are our young thoughts that ever cry for fame
To the cold world, too poor to give the boon,
Whose laurel now is hardly worth the wear,
For many brows have worn its glory out !
Great minds are growing now, of which the world
Has yet to hear, and there are crowns to gain,
Which were not worth dishonoring the brow,
If there were none to see us wear them.
Although a crown is not much in itself,
The honor of it is its real worth !
With some, the sphere of life is limited
To the rough turning of the clods we tread,
Or, to the hewing of the forest-tree.
To others 't is enlarged. Oft earth is grasped
Within the girdle of a mighty mind.
In early life was one, whose eagle glance,
Measured all Europe with his battle sword.
Nature had crowned him with a noble brow :
But now, alas ! all that remains of him,
Is the great pathway up to fame he took,
Where none may follow, and where none may lead,

Upon whose top, he like a statue stands,
Awing the world from its immortal height.
Yet sleeps he well on nature's softest couch,
Like a brave warrior on the battle-field,
Ready to be awakened. What was he?
Oh fame, a thousand years from now, shall tell!
Although no martial music round him pealed,
Nor silent armies heard his dying call,
Yet, when he passed away from earth, it seemed
As if the heart of Europe ceased to beat,
While trembling Death, oped wide its silent gates
To let the great soul pass. And fame still hangs
Its laurel round the hero's honored grave,
Within the bosom of his country made,
And holier to France, than is her throne!

Oh there are times of trouble, soon to try
The mettle of men's souls as never yet
They have been tried. When great events shall come,
Crowding upon each other like a host,
To crush the iron heels of despotism
From the sad ruin of earth's battle-field,
I hear the flutter of the dove of peace,
As slow and lone she hies her to the west,
To build her nest hard by the setting sun.
While Europe's nations rush to awful war,
And waste each other in the dreadful strife,

Until the earth beneath their thinning ranks
Grows hard with human bones. The mighty road
Of war is paved with cannon balls and skulls,
Propped with the clay the carrion-birds have spared,
Making him brave who treads it. Come, O death!
And hide the future from me. It requires
All of a soul to bear the ordeal!
It may be but a dream—this fearful thing—
And yet it haunts me with a form of truth,
For earth of late, has mighty sinful grown,
And there are hardly seven good souls within it,
To save it from destruction. On it rolls!
The race to ruin 's ever bold and swift,
And earth is like a horse upon it,
With Satan for its rider, hurrying on
Its march of progress to the end of time,
With poetry within it that shall take
A mighty bard to summon forth, to give
Sweet strings of music to so rough a harp
And keep it through the ages ever tuned—
One whose bright fame shall see the earth turn round
For the last time, to face the dying sun,
Ere God shall sweep them both like splendid wrecks
With His great broom, from off creation's floor,
With all the dust that they have gathered there.

The earth is troubled now. All that it wants,

Is a Napoleon to stem the tide of war,
But he is dead. Life gives but one such man,
And there are none to take his awful place
In the great van of battles yet to be.

No monuments their stories tell,
Bright blanks they are, by glory filled.
'T was in the battle-hour they fell,
When death moved thousands on the field.

He, through their ranks his message sped,
They struggled nobly to be free ;
And many in their steps shall tread,
To fight—but not for victory.

Oh, where the brave stood on the field,
Shall in their places stand the brave,
The path of glory still be filled,
With warriors travelling to the grave.

Thus from the Present do we prophesy,
For of the Future 't is the truest seer
For us to look through like astronomers,
Whose well-aimed glasses to the evening sky,
Look full and clear upon a dying orb,
Melting in beauty in the sea of space,
And casting off its gems of brilliancy,

Like golden pearls in a blue ocean dropped,
And then forever in its smoothness lost.
Be still, vain man ! nor murmur against God,
For He is wiser in His providence
Than thou in reading it. It is a veil
Which prayers shall penetrate better than sight,
For they shall touch His throne. Know yet these things !
The waves of war shall rock the world to peace,
And such a peace were worth a thousand wars,
While time in its worn socket waxes dim,
And swiftly flickers to its last sad year,
When dread eternity shall come and sweep
Its glory from the memory of God.
Eternity—earth trembles at the word ;—
Death keeps the soul from jumping into it,
Else I would jump, however great the leap,
And revel in it like a swimmer bold,
With God's almighty arm to hold me up,
In that great ocean of the Infinite,
Where great minds wandered round the idea of God,
And tried in vain to fathom it, till death
Put out their lights, and left them in the dark !

'Twas in a dream, a star shot down from heaven,
And the worlds trembled as it whistling passed ;
And then a hush—the beat of time's great heart
Was still—and on eternity's vast shore,

Life's waves of human souls had ceased to flow.
I looked again—heaven's hosts assembled were,
To keep the peace between the summoned worlds:
While far as space their glittering armor shone
All blazing with the radiance of God.
And then I heard a voice whose mighty tone
Echoed like thunder through eternity,
'Let there be judgment'! And the books were oped,
And for awhile the paths of life and death
Were thronged with countless millions—then they grew
Forever still, and travelled were no more,
And hell in dire revenge set fire to earth,
That it might make room for its large increase,
While a groan filled the mighty soul of death,
That this world's drama was forever o'er.

Here ends my poem; here my task is done,
And I am found near a full-rounded stop,
Succeeded by the dash of discontent
Which I have left blank, for the world to fill
With one fell swoop of its misguided pen,
Glittering like lightning in the critic's hand,
To blast the poet and his monument
Which he has reared to fame, that something else
Beside his name might be immortal here,
And echo still, when silent is his dust.

POEMS.



MOUNT AUBURN.

This is the city of the sacred dead,
I feel them round me, they are with me here,
Their presence follows me where'er I tread,
Like viewless phantoms in a fitting sphere.

A stillness broods upon this holy place,
And earth's great echo ceases here to roll,
While wandering shapes from fairer regions trace
The living presence of a human soul.

Here mortal sleepers are forever free
From the great billow of creation's woes ;
No sweeping surge of life' tempestuous sea,
Breaks o'er the still wave of their long repose.

Lovely and gently were they in their life :
Like summer flowers, they flourished but to fade ;
They bade farewell unto a world of strife,
And down in death their fame and fortunes laid.

Let not the world in living glory spent,
Its genius match with greatness buried here ;
Whose only trophy is a monument,
Whose only praise an oft repeated tear.

Once they were moving in life's busy scenes,
Their hopes to them a high ambition gave ;
But Death the laurel from the victor weans,
Man ploughs the earth until he finds a grave.

And here they sleep in long and sweet repose,
The morning sun, bright in the eastern skies,
Calling life's millions to their daily woes,
No more shall bid them from their couches rise.

What though they were of humble destinies,
Of lowly rank in life and birth obscure ?
What though earth knew not of their victories ?
Of one great hope their pious souls were sure ;

Which gathered all its radiance from God,
And lit the form of Death that stood between,
Breaking upon the path their steps had trod,
Like a bright sunbeam in a sunset scene.

And through that hope they to their glory passed,
Up its high steps to an immortal throne,
Where human grandeur ceases to outlast
The frail and crumbling relics of its own.

They kindled in the soul love's holier flame,
To virtue's noblest cause their lives were given;
They lived and died uncherished by their fame:
Religion's path leads only up to heaven.

Over this sacred soil in by-gone years,
The Indians of the forest loved to roam;
Where now forgotten by life's hopes and fears,
The children of the white man find a home.

But where the prairie stretches like a sea,
Its broadness vastly to the setting sun;
The red man rests alike in slumber free,
Free as the sleeper here whose toil is done.

Perchance beneath yon unpretending mound,
Lies one who reached another world ere this;
To the soft pillow when the morn smiles round,
No mother comes her sleeping child to kiss.

And noble forms are shrouded in decay,
Whose brows the wreath of glory might have won ;
While others in life's last sad honors lay,
Ambition's race forever with them run.

To deck their graves, cold monuments are placed
In silent beauty o'er their mouldering clay ;
The marble slab by the cold chisel traced,
The only tablet of their history.

And these but cheer the stranger's pensive sight,
Their praise transcends the virtues of the dead ;
Upon them rest the silent tears of night,
Instead of tears by living mortals shed.

Nature spreads loveliness around the dead,
The shadows seem like angels lighting down ;
In death there's grandeur, while the monarch's head,
Rests in his royal tomb without a crown.

O ! who that 'mid the scenes of earth has trod,
Within his inmost being wished to die ;
To be borne back on death's cold wave to God,
And at His feet in penitence to lie ?

No hope or kindness for the recreant soul,
Of all its golden prospects reft by fate,
Whose curtain falls in darkness on life's goal,
While Death forever closes mercy's gate.

Oh, they are blest! who when 't is time to die,
Resign their lives without a single strife,
Furl up their beaten sails without a sigh,
And sail adown the ebbing tide of life.

To such, the varied scenes of earth impart
A twilight softness and a pensive glow,
Which yearns around them as they hence depart,
For tears to shed upon a world of woe.

Here sleep they sweetly. When I pass away,
I'll ask forgetful man no honor grand
Save this—beneath these sacred clods to lay,
And thus to rest within my native land.

Maybe some stranger here in future years
Shall stand and ponder on this self same spot;
To sanctify it with more hallowed tears,
And reconcile his soul to death's sad lot.

Here he may pause above my lovely tomb,
For death will come to me as come it must,
With many a wild and lovely flower to bloom,
In mute affection o'er my silent dust.

While angel-throngs stretch out their hands to clasp
Life's beaten vessel to a shore of rest;
And Death opes wide its silent arms to grasp
My troubled bosom to its peaceful breast.

MY NATIVE LAND.

My native land ! I love thee well,
My own, my glorious own !
Thou hast no monarch on thy soil,
No sovereign on thy throne.
Land of the mighty and the brave !
Still do thy heroes live ;
Still does the brightness of their lives,
New glory to thee give.

What though the empires of the earth,
Rush to unequal fight ;
To dim the glory of their arms,
By might, opposing might ?
But not until our shores, menaced
By foreign foes we see,
Shall millions then of freemen rush
To battle, bold and free.

Let Europe look, and measure well
The distance of a power,
That keeps its sword unsheathed and sharp,
Ready for battle-hour.
All glory to the stars and stripes,
The flag of land and sea !
And death to all by might or right,
Who dare to strike at thee !

And long and brightly may'st thou wave,
From sea to sea, afar ;
For 't is the blood our fathers shed,
That made us what we are !
Here glory droops her crimson fold
Over the mighty dead ;
They were the only brave of earth,
Who thus for freedom bled.

Let Europe point with sceptred hand,
And taunt us with our slaves,
Go view her many battle-fields,
And mark her many graves !
For they are slaves—they know it not
Who bend around a throne,
Their crowns but gild their monarchs' brows,
The weight is all their own.

My native land ! when far away,
None shall with thee compare ;
' My Native Land,' kind words so sweet,
They 'd most convey me there !
All glory to the stars and stripes,
Forever may they wave !
Rather than see my country fall,
I 'd be myself, a slave !

THE FROST KING.

He 's come ! he 's come ! the Frost King 's come !

 You can tell where his steps have been,
By the blighted vales he has left behind,
 And the fields, no longer green.
The sky has changed its autumn bloom,
 For its own blue native shades ;
And lovelier than a sunset scene,
 The Indian-summer fades.

He 's come ! he 's come ! the Frost King 's come !

 On the bracing northern air ;
From the frozen isles of the Arctic sea,
 Where roams the polar bear ;
Where the lost fisher sleeps through the lasting night,
 With a bark his only grave ;
With the stiffened sail for his winding sheet,
 And his pillow, the marble wave.

He's come ! he's come ! the Frost King's come !
He has hurried swiftly by ;
From the blighted fields, and the desert wastes,
That stretch 'neath the Greenland sky.
The Ætnas of Iceland have felt his breath,
As he coldly hastened past ;
And the smoke of the Esquimaux's snow-hut home,
Has cooled on his freezing blast.

He's come—he's come—and the rippling stream
Shall cease its pleasant flow ;
And the frozen lake through the winter night,
With beacon fires shall glow.
As the skater glides o'er the gleaming ice,
Like a shadow bold and free ;
With a hip hurrah and a bounding heart,
And a voice of merry glee.

He's come ! he's come ! the Frost King's come !
For a welcome he does not stay ;
We must meet him abroad as best we can,
And turn from his greeting away ;
But alas ! alas ! for the poor of earth,
As the keen winds whistle by ;
That lay them adown in the still, cold calm
Of the midnight hour, to die.

HOHENLINDEN.

Oh, coldly blew the winter blast,
Which mingling with the tempest's wrath,
Piled up its drifts all thick and fast,
Within the woodman's forest path,
Soon to be filled with warriors brave,
Travelling that pathway to the grave.

From Munich's lone and pensive tower,
While deeper grew the drifts of snow,
Pealed forth the chime of midnight hour,
As toiled they on to meet the foe,
To brighten Linden's awful night,
With lurid flash and booming light.

Sternly they strove and long they fought,
While louder grew the battle-yell ;
Sadly on ranks with glory fraught,
The gun and bayonet did tell,
As then two armies met, and felt
The frozen snow, with blood to melt.

As morning dawned through heavy clouds,
On Linden's battle-field of gore ;
Thousands within their snowy shrouds,
Reposed to wake to light no more,
While pealed the martial battle-strain
Thousands of requiems for the slain.

Many were left in dark ravines,
From glory's dreams forever free.
Oh, Linden ! what sad, mournful scenes,
Cluster around thy memory ;
What tales of blood forever stain
The sterile beauty of thy plain.

HOPE'S ISLAND.

Mystic hands were slowly rolling
From the future its dark shroud ;
Future years were brightly coming
Like as sunbeams from a cloud.
And an island decked with blossom,
And with fragrant singing bowers,
Rose in beauty on life's ocean,
Sweet with song and blooming flowers.

There the heart's own music floating,
Ever through the perfumed air,
Wooed my footsteps to be roving
Mid the bowers that seemed so fair ;
But a cloud was quickly gathering
O'er its bright and pleasant skies ;
And I left the blighted Eden
And the seeming paradise.

On life's billows once more gliding,
O'er the dark and troubled sea ;
Now and then I'm often sighing,
That an Eden ne'er could be.
Hope's bright isle of fragrant blossom,
Sank like pearl in midnight river ;
As the cold waves of life's ocean,
O'er its beauty closed forever.

CHILDHOOD.

Fain would I throw the mask of time,
From off my childhood's days ;
And bid fond memory awhile,
Forget her yearning gaze.
That I might look with mine own eyes,
Upon their scenes again ;
The only golden isles I've passed,
Upon life's troubled main !

Oh, for a second pair of eyes,
Undimmed by after years ;
As my young eyes were then, which wept
Not over doubts and fears—
That I might look out on life's deep,
As on a summer sea ;
And think the distant barks I saw,
Were like my own as free.

The haunts and loves of boyhood's hours—

These are the only things

Which I would wish to love below,

Mid life's imaginings.

The only portraits I would wish,

Hung up in memory's hall ;

A look at which should be as sweet

As scenes which they recall.

Where naught might interposing steal,

Of shadow or of night ;

To dim the full and glorious orb

Of their sweet morning light ;

To feel again within my frame,

A heart of joy and smiles,

Where now amid the rust of years,

Hope's anchor wasting lies.

TO THE DEPARTED YEAR.

Fare thee well ! farewell forever !

Thou hast cast around my soul,
Golden hopes and bright ambitions,
Failing of their destined goal.

Fare thee well with all thy glory !

Pleasant were thy passing hours ;
Yes, thy setting suns were lovely,
Lovely were thy fading flowers.

Beauteous thy fragrant blossoms,

Borne upon the breath of June ;
All as fair thy ebbing oceans,
Waving 'neath the harvest-moon.

Lovely was thine Indian summer,
With its soft and rosy light,
Picturing in the lake and river,
Landscapes fading into night.

Fare thee well, sad year, forever!
Steal not on my mind again;
For I fain would hear the echo
Of life's morning bells again.

THOUGHTS BY THE SEA-SIDE.

Oh, for some bark with plashing oar,
To bear me from this lonely shore !
For I would see this sunny bay,
Behind me gently fade away ;
The mew and petrel skim the sea,
And why should I not be as free ?
My thoughts are far on waves of blue,
Why should I not be on them too ?
'T is not because I 'm sick of home,
It is because I love to roam.

For then I feel that I am free
As ever I would wish to be ;
And when the pleasant day is o'er
To turn my bark towards the shore,
And think with pleasure that I've been
'Mid ocean waves, and isles of green,
Only to greet upon return,
Sweet friends with hearts that warmly burn,
And feel the kiss of love's fond joy,
Welcome her long-lost sailor-boy !

RETROSPECT.

Fond memory loves to gaze with pain,
 Back on life's vanished hours ;
Yet who would be a child again,
 To gather only flowers.
A few short hours of joy to win,
 Of pleasure wild and free,
And then the tide of years sets in,
 And bears us out to sea.

And only then to feel and know,
 Whither our barks do tend ;
And not till then to find below,
 That pleasure has an end.
Oh ! there are hours like golden isles,
 Which stretch back in the past,
Where love upon us sweetly smiles,
 And hopes are round us cast.

Thus memory strews life's weary track,
 With relics from her bowers ;
Yet who would wish their childhood back,
 To gather only flowers !
Let me alone ; I love to gaze
 Upon the past in vain ;
I'm dreaming of my childhood's days—
 When will they come again !

TO N. B.

I plunged back in the tide of years,
To find a likeness there of thee ;
A radiant form of smiles and tears,
In joy and sorrow wild and free !

But memory's chain hath let thee slip,
With all thy promise and thy fame ;
Scarce doth the spirit prompt the lip
To music, with thy gentle name.

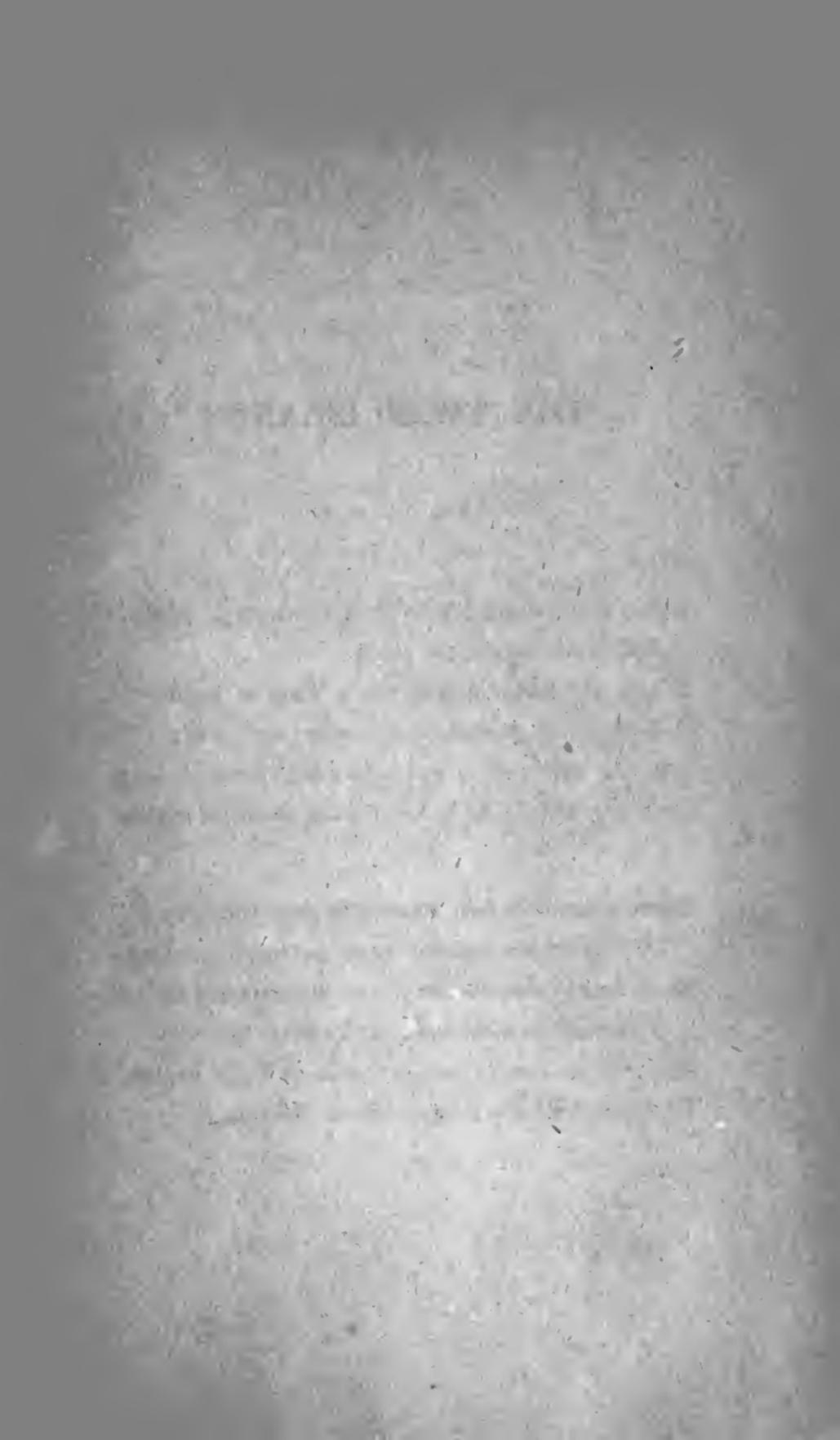
For many names have wrote themselves
Upon the tablet of the soul ;
O'er which life's fuller tide of waves,
As over thine shall silent roll.

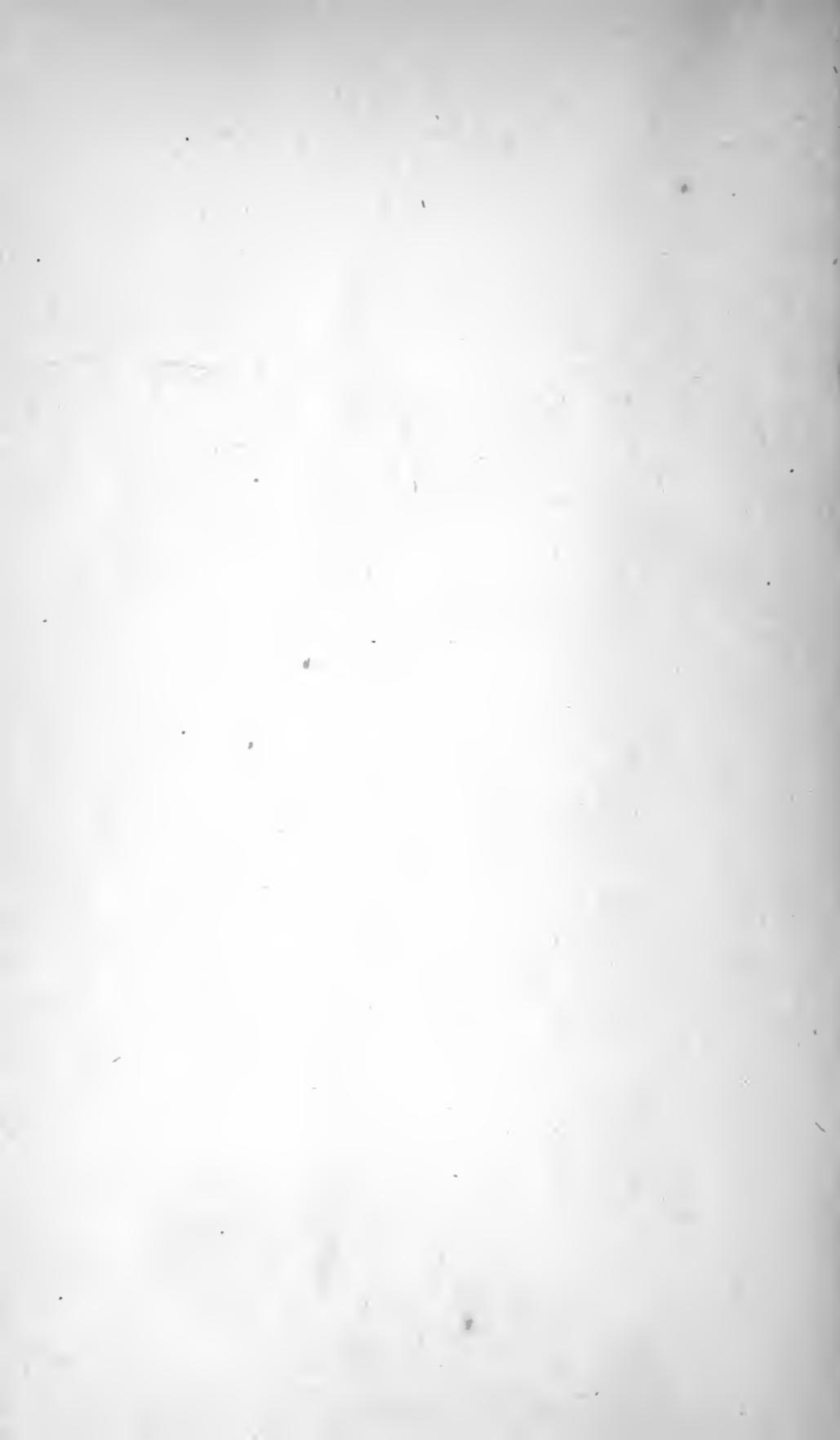
Go ! and forget me ; we shall meet
Within the better land at last,
Where mercy's smile divinely sweet,
Shall shed its radiance o'er the past.

THE TWIN ISLANDS.

There's an island enclosed in shadows of night,
And unlit by even a star ;
Where the islander sees not a beam of light,
And where mortals forget what they are :
And the sailors who sail o'er life's troubled deep,
Call that sweet, stilly isle by the name of Sleep.

There's another isle, more fair than the isles
Of brightness which bloom on the azure deep ;
More lovely than those where the summer smiles,
And mortals visit that isle in their sleep,
And call its bright scenes in the twilight beams,
By the name of Visions and of Dreams.







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